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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MAPUTO 000220

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SUBJECT: FM AGREES TO BILATERAL POLITICAL DIALOGUE, AND TO
DISCUSS AN ASSISTANCE AGREEMENT

REF: MAPUTO 172

Classified By: Pol-Econ Chief Matthew P.Roth, Reasons 1.4(b)&(d)

¶1. (U) Note: This report was written February 26 but final transmission was delayed. While FM Abreu was dismissed from her duties on March 10, this conversation and the issues discussed will serve as a basis for our first meeting with the new Foreign Minister. End Note.

¶2. (U) Summary: In a meeting with the Charge, Foreign Minister Alcinda Abreu agreed to begin a formal bilateral political dialogue. She also expressed interest in a bilateral agreement encompassing all USG assistance, and spoke on possible Mozambican participation in peacekeeping operations and on the political situations in Zimbabwe and Kenya. We will begin crafting an agenda for a political dialogue and have USG lawyers work with the MFA on an agreement encompassing all USG assistance. End Summary.

Relationship at an All-Time High

¶3. (U) The Charge d'Affaires, USAID Director, and P/E Chief met with Mozambican Foreign Minister Alcinda de Abreu on February 21. The Charge opened the meeting by highlighting Mozambique's growing profile in Washington as U.S. assistance to the country has increased, mentioning specifically the successful visits of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Leavitt and high-level Department of Defense officials. He added that State's AF Deputy Assistant Secretary Carol Thompson would visit Mozambique March 2-3.

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Noting that President Armando Guebuza visited the United States more than any other country, the FM said U.S.-Mozambican relations were at an all-time high.

Agreement to Start a Formal Political Dialogue

¶4. (U) Suggesting that the heightened profile presented an opportunity to develop a formal political bilateral dialogue, the Charge proposed meeting every six months to address bilateral issues. The Charge commented that he had raised this idea with the Mozambican Ambassador to the United States who agreed that it had merit. The Charge indicated such a dialogue could include global issues such as the United Nations, Kosovo, human rights, as well as regional issues such as strengthening the capacity of SADC, moving forward on regional economic integration, Kenya, and democracy.

¶5. (U) The FM agreed, saying that the GRM has similar dialogues with other countries, including one with the European Union which began in 2005. She suggested that,

given the interest in AFRICOM, for example, such a venue could be useful to discuss military interests as well. She demurred on Kosovo, however, (reftel), noting that Mozambique traditionally avoids getting involved in this type of controversial issue. On Kenya, the FM said the GRM was very concerned with how the tribal issues were playing out and expressed her personal relief that Mozambican eminence grise Graca Machel was now involved.

PKOs and Zimbabwe: An Alternate Reality

¶16. (U) Noting the USG's increasing concerns over Zimbabwe, the Charge queried the FM on how she viewed Zimbabwe's future. The FM responded that she felt the South African-led resolution process was seemingly successful, as Zimbabwe would soon hold elections that would be observed by Angolan experts.

¶17. (SBU) The Charge suggested that some USG training for Mozambique's armed forces (FADM) might dwindle as the GRM had yet to commit to substantial peacekeeping operations (PKOs), and asked when the GRM would begin to participate in PKOs in the region. The FM said she believed that the GRM was actively involved in these missions as observers, listing Mozambican participation in places like East Timor, Sudan, and the FADM's participation in a SADC stand-by force. That said, she felt that it would be politically untenable for the GRM to send forces to ongoing war zones, as Mozambicans are still suffering from the trauma of their civil war.

Discussing a Bilateral Assistance Framework

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¶18. (U) The USAID Director highlighted the increased USG assistance to Mozambique and noted the increase in the number of USG staff and contractors involved in implementation. In light of these twin factors, he urged the FM to consider moving forward on a bilateral assistance agreement to cover all the USG's programs in Mozambique, ranging from issues of licensing, to taxes and visa issues. The FM agreed, and suggested that USAID lawyers begin the process by meeting with the MFA's legal department.

COMMENT

¶19. (C) The FM seemed far removed from reality on some key issues. Her statements at the meeting did nothing to dispel rumors that she is not particularly influential within FRELIMO circles nor gainsay criticisms heard from other diplomatic missions that she is managing both her portfolio and Ministry poorly. She did, however, agree to a formal bilateral dialogue and was clearly willing to discuss further ways to negotiate a bilateral agreement for USG assistance programs. To follow up on Abreu's commitment, we will begin immediately to work with GRM officials to identify concrete agenda items for a dialogue and with the MFA's juridical affairs group to identify the next steps to a bilateral agreement on assistance. END COMMENT.
Chapman